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Artificial Intelligence And Academic Dishonesty In University Of Calabar: Social Studies Teachers And Students Perception

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between artificial intelligence (AI) tool usage and academic dishonesty at the University of Calabar, focusing on the perceptions of Social Studies teachers and students. A correlational survey research design was adopted to guide the study, which raised three specific objectives. The sample comprised 23 Social Studies teachers and 216 Social Studies students selected from the university. A researcher-constructed instrument titled the Artificial Intelligence and Academic Dishonesty in Nigerian Universities Questionnaire (AI-ADNUQ) was utilized for data collection. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and simple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that the level of academic dishonesty among tertiary students regarding cheating with AI tools is remarkably high. Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that the proportion of variation in AI tool utilization—specifically in terms of direct source duplication—showed a statistically significant relationship with academic dishonesty. Based on these findings, it is recommended that Social Studies teachers in universities intentionally orient students on the academic dangers associated with unauthorized AI manipulation. Additionally, university authorities should establish school-based integrity clubs to systematically create awareness among undergraduates regarding the severe consequences of academic dishonesty

Keywords: Academic dishonesty, Artificial intelligence, social studies teachers and students perception

Introduction

Nigerian schools, much like those in many other countries worldwide, have consciously embraced technological dynamism to improve classroom instruction. This is seen specifically in the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in accordance with directives from the Federal Ministry of Education. The core purpose of deploying AI within the educational ecosystem is to empower learners through individualized pathways, peer tutoring, and intelligent tutoring systems. However, if left unregulated, this integration risks over-reliance on technology that threatens to replace human teaching attributes or create unintended avenues for academic dishonesty (Secreto et al, 2025). Therefore, it is appropriate to ensure that students' potential is enhanced in the future (DepEd, 2025). This is evident in the speed with which AI is advancing in different spheres of education,

such as maintaining honesty in academic work, methods of evaluation and students' study habits. However, while AI-powered tools have several benefits—such as improving efficiency in research and writing skills—academics have also raised concerns about academic dishonesty as a result of students' dependence on AI-generated content.

With the rapid growth and widespread acceptance of AI in academic disciplines, curbing the resulting academic dishonesty has become a critical challenge in modern education. Although AI offers numerous benefits to the academic field, scholars remain worried about the extent to which students misuse it for cheating, which has prompted the introduction of anti-AI checkers (Lin, Huang & Yang, 2024). Academic dishonesty is defined as any deliberate, unauthorized behavior before, during, or after an examination that provides a student with an unfair advantage (Egaga, Bahago & Haggai, 2023). Ultimately, this behaviour creates serious distortions in the educational system and yields attendant consequences, such as producing graduates unprepared for future challenges, fostering low self-esteem among students, and ruining institutional reputations.

The use and misuse of AI tools are considered ethical and unethical practices, respectively. The categorization of AI tool usage in the academic field—classified as ethical or unethical—emerged from the study by Mwita and Mwilongo (2025) to provide emphasis and appropriate guidance on AI use. When AI tools are correctly applied, they accelerate job productivity for teachers and enhance students' learning outcomes. Conversely, unethical practices include the intentional failure to acknowledge information obtained from AI, over-dependence on AI-generated content without personal input, and utilizing AI to falsify data. This kind of unethical activity compromises academic honesty and underscores the importance of ethical AI usage as a complement to, not a substitute for, human effort.

In recent Nigerian school settings, learning activities incorporate technology in several ways, validating that technology usage and education are inseparable. Technology provides comfort, efficiency, effectiveness, and accessibility, but its greatest risk lies in how it is utilized. Twenty-first-century tertiary students consistently struggle with managing academic frustration and adhering to ethics while exploiting the benefits of AI tools (Opoh, Ekpoto & Egan, 2025). Due to the increasing outcry concerning students' academic achievement and honesty, a recent study proposed a standard foundation for Social Studies students and teachers in tertiary institutions regarding the ethical use of AI tools in learning. A 2021 study conducted at the University of Western Australia categorized the severity of academic dishonesty into three levels: Level 1 (Minor Breach), Level 2 (Moderate Breach), and Level 3 (Major Breach). The first category (Minor) involves violations caused by a learner's inability to understand ethical academic conduct. The second category (Moderate) consists of more serious violations stemming from a lack of respect for research ethics. The third category (Major) covers offenses that involve purposeful and severe breaches of academic honesty.

The major problem is the overrepresentation of academic dishonesty among students in the age of readily available AI tools. An average Nigerian student spends too much time editing a single page of plagiarized, AI-generated content. Available evidence suggests that 17% of Nigerian students in tertiary institutions rely on AI because they fail to revise their work before examinations, 30% depend on AI for most of their academic tasks, and 50% utilize it partly while completing the majority of the work independently (Joshi, 2024). In cases of direct duplication, Yomiuri (2024) asserted that academic dishonesty is seriously on the rise, with almost 30% of secondary school and higher education students who rely on AI turning to AI-generated content in place of originality. This indicates the ease with which students can misuse AI tools and projects a potential disconnect between the rapid advancement of AI technology and the development of pedagogical strategies to address its implications. It is against this backdrop that this study investigated the association between AI and academic dishonesty, with particular reference to the perceptions of Social Studies students and teachers at the University of Calabar.

Objectives of the study

The study was designed to investigate the relationship between AI tools and academic dishonesty in University of Calabar: Social Studies teachers and students' perception. Specifically, the study sought to;

1. Determine the level of academic honesty and AI tools usage in terms of cheating
2. Find out the level of academic honesty and AI tools usage in terms of plagiarism

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3. Examine the relationship between academic honesty and AI tools in terms of direct source duplication

Methods

The study utilized a correlational survey design to collect data from social studies students and teachers from the University of Calabar. In doing so, data were collected in the university without manipulating the environment, ensuring that no alteration occurred. All teachers and students in the Department of Social Studies and Civic Education, University of Calabar consisted the population. The department has 23 Social Studies teachers and 415 students. All the 23 teachers were used 216 students were sampled and used as respondents. The purposive sampling technique was used to select all the teachers and available students from 100 level to 400 level in the Department of Social Studies and Civic Education, University of Calabar who served respondents to the study. Moreover, only respondents that encountered AI tools were used in order to ensure unbiased selection.

An online survey questionnaire titled: AI and Academic Dishonesty in Neria Universities Questionnaire (AI-ADNUQ), constructed by the researchers was used to collect the necessary information from the participants. The AI-ADNUQ consists two sections. The first contained the demographic variables of the respondents and the second contained modified questions that indicates the level of academic honesty in using AI generated content for academic purpose with direct or indirect duplication. The instrument was validated by an expert in ICT unit and another from Research and Measurement unit from the university.

To collect data, the researchers obtained a written consent endorsed by the Head of Department, Social Studies and Civic Education that shows the study's approval. The AI-ADNUQ was administered via the Department group WhatsApp for the teachers and individually to the students WhatsApp pages. The data collected were analysed with descriptive statistics and simple regression.

Results

Research Question One: What is the level of academic honesty and AI tools usage in terms of cheating?

Table 1: Level of Academic Honesty in Using AI Tools Usage in Terms of Cheating

S/N	**Items**	**Mean Scores**	**Remarks**
1	Students' usage of AI tools in answering tests or assignments in the university of Calabar	3.85	Very High
2	Students uses AI tools to search for specific answers not taking assessments or tests	2.58	High
3	Students use AI tools when struggling to understand unfamiliar questions in the examination hall	3.11	Very High
	Cumulative Mean	**3.18**	**Very High**

Table 1 revealed that the level of academic dishonesty among tertiary students in terms of cheating with AI tools in the university is very high. The result was interpreted item by item and the indication was very high, with a cumulative mean of 3.18. The indicators were students' usage of AI tools in answering tests or assignments in the University of Calabar, students use AI tools to search for specific answers not taking assessments or tests, students use AI tools when struggling to understand unfamiliar questions in the examination hall the highest mean was 3.85 based from the formulated statement.

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Research Question Two: What is the level of academic honesty and AI tools usage in terms of plagiarism?

Table 2: Level of Academic Honesty and AI tools Usage in Terms of Plagiarism

S/N	Items	Mean Scores	Remarks
1	Students' use AI tools to reference academic work and appropriately acknowledge same	2.58	High
2	Students incorporate AI-generated content into academic writing without proper acknowledgement	2.86	High
3	Students use AI tools to generate materials for academic project because it is difficult to tract	3.61	Very High
	Cumulative Mean	**3.02**	**Very High**

Table 2 indicated the level of academic dishonesty in terms of plagiarism was very high. The item one that students' use AI tools to reference academic work and appropriately acknowledge same has a high mean of 2.58, implying that students unethically use AI tools as sources of academic writing without ensuring proper referencing as well as citations.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between academic honesty and ai tools in terms of direct source duplication

Table 3: Test of Relationship Between Academic Honesty and AI Tools in Terms of Direct Source Duplication

Model	R	R. square	Adjusted R. square	Std error of the estimate	
1	.240a	.057	.056	1.040	
Model	Sum of square	df	Mean square	F-ratio	p-value
Regression	50.562	1	50.562	46.730	.000(b)
Residual	828.808	238	1.080		
Total	879.370	239			
Variables	Unstandardized regression weight B	Standardized regression weight	Beta weight	t	p-value
(Constant)	17.146	.294		8.350	.000
Artificial Intelligence	.076	.011	.240	6.836	.000

* Significant at .05 level

The result in Table 3 indicated that the correlation coefficient between academic dishonesty and AI tools in terms of direct source duplication was (R) of .240 with an associated coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.057. This coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.057 denotes that 5.7% variation in AI tools in terms of direct source duplication is accounted for academic dishonesty. The result further indicated that the proportion of variation in AI tools in terms of direct source duplication and association with academic dishonesty was significant (F (1, 775) = 46.730, p = .000). Since the p-value of .000 was less than 0.05 of level of significance. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the conclusion drawn is that the academic dishonesty was significantly related AI tools in terms of direct source duplication. The identified equation to understand this relationship was that AI tools in terms of direct source duplication (Y) = 17.146 + 0.076 (academic dishonesty).

Discussion of findings

The study revealed that the level of academic dishonesty among tertiary students in terms of cheating with AI tools in the university is very high. This finding is supported by Benke and Szőke (2024) claimed that students in higher institution of learning no longer apply their knowledge when doing academic work as about 17% students copy directly from technologies like AI and ChatGPT. Corroborating Benke and Szőke's assertion, Taylor's (2025) found that 26% of students in colleges relay on AI tools for academic writing, indicating 13% increase from Benke and Szőke (2024) findings. The increasing trend revealed a growing reliance of students on AI as part of academic lives. In addition, students reported frequent use of AI tools to complete online evaluations, tests, or assignments, which was also interpreted as High with weighted mean of 2.86, reinforcing concerns about academic dishonesty. In contrary, Markley (2024) blamed the growing trend on school failure and decline in parental involvement in students academics.

The second objective revealed that the level of academic dishonesty in terms of plagiarism among universities students was very high. Though, inconsistent with Odongo, Agyemang and Forkuor (2021) that students in Nigerian tertiary institutions use electronic cheating devices such as the Internet and cell phones powered by Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) to lift answers either for assignment or in examinations. This act is supported by students ease access to Internet and computers. Students access to technological gadgets as well as Internet facilities is not an issue but the problem is the dishonest acts associated with use of AI powered technology for cheating. Srivastava (2025) attributed the acts to lack of the understanding and in ability to adequately apply the guiding principles of citation of all original authors when integrating AI tools in academic writing.

The findings from the third objective revealed a significant proportion of variation in AI tools in terms of direct source duplication and association with academic dishonesty. The finding is a critical indication that AI tools in terms of direct source duplication is relatively high in the area of the study. The finding is in consonance with result from earlier studies like Benke and Szőke (2024); Lund, Lee, Mannuru, and Arutla (2025) and Opoh, Ekpoto and Egan (2025), that relationship existed between academic honesty and direct source duplication using AI tools. The authors also acknowledged that most of the students involved in academic dishonesty do so because they lack the awareness, while some perceived AI tools as a safe means of shop lifting contents. Hence, any form of cheating or plagiarism without proper recognition of the source using AI or other academic tools with the intention to facilitate academic success amount to academic dishonesty (Song, 2024).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that academic dishonesty among tertiary students in terms of cheating with AI tools in the university is very high. The conclusion was drawn based on the three indicators used for measurement; students' usage of AI tools in answering tests or assignments in the university of Calabar, students use AI tools to search for specific answers, not taking assessments or tests, students use AI tools when struggling to understand difficult concepts as well as questions in the examination hall the highest with a cumulative mean above the benchmark. This by implication is that students unethically use AI tools as sources of academic writing without ensuring proper referencing as well as citations. Therefore, academic dishonesty was significantly related AI tools in terms of direct source duplication. The following recommendations were made:

1. Social studies teachers in universities should be intentional in orientating the students on the academic danger associated with cheating using AI tools for necessary amends.

2. Social Studies Association of Nigeria (SOSAN) should organize seminar for students through the students' chapter of SOSAN on how to paraphrase, acknowledge cited works appropriately and avoid direct lifting of other scholars' work.
3. School authorities from secondary to tertiary level should form school-based clubs, purposely to create awareness among students on the consequences of academic dishonesty.

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